

Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended) A self tightening, ankle brace, comprising combination,

a) strap structure including first and second elongated strap portions, said strap first portion extending in a generally longitudinal direction, said structure defining a through slit extending diagonally through the strap first portion at an angle  $\alpha$  between 40° and 50° relative to said longitudinal direction,

b) said strap first portion adapted to be wrapped about an ankle,

c) said strap second portion ~~adapted to extend~~ extending through the strap first portion via the slit, then and folded at the slit to extend downwardly and normal to said longitudinal direction and at one side of the ankle, then underfoot, and then upwardly at the opposite side of the ankle, for operative attachment and said first portion.

Serial No.10/753,280

Claim 2 (original) The combination of claim 1 wherein said structure forms a unitary strap incorporating said first and second portions.

Claim 3 (original) The combination of claim 1 wherein the second portion is folded relative to the first portion, proximate the slit.

Claim 4 (currently amended) The combination of claim 3 wherein the slit extends linearly entirely through the strap first portion and at an said angle  $\alpha$  relative to the strap first portion direction of elongation, where there being hook or pile fasteners on the strap and between which the slit is located.

$$40^{\circ} < \alpha < 50^{\circ}$$

Claim 5 (currently amended) The combination of claim 1 including stiffener means on the first strap portion and proximate the slit[[.]], said means including elongated stiffeners extending parallel to the slit and at opposite sides thereof, with cushioning at the stiffeners.

Claim 6 (original) The combination of claim 1 including an adjustable hook and pile connection defining said attachment.

Claim 7 (currently amended) The method of establishing a self tightening ankle brace in operative position which includes

a) providing strap structure including first and second elongated strap portions, said strap first portion extending in a generally longitudinal direction, said structure defining a through slit extending through the strap first portion at an angle  $\alpha$  between 40° and 50° relative to said longitudinal direction,

b) wrapping the strap first portion about a leg just above or proximate the malleolus,

c) passing said strap second portion through the slit and ~~then~~ with folding at or proximate the slit to extend downwardly at one side of the ankle, then underfoot, and then upwardly at the opposite side of the ankle, in operative attachment with said first portion.

Claim 8 (original) The method of claim 7 including operatively attaching the strap second portion to the strap first portion via hook and pin elements to tighten the strap second portion under foot.

9. The method of claim 7 including allowing the strap second portion to self adjustingly slide endwise in said slit, in response to ankle flexing, assisting tightening of the strap structure.

Claim 10 (currently amended) The method of claim 7 including forming said slit to extend linearly at ~~an~~ said angle  $\alpha$  relative to the strap first portion direction of elongation, ~~where~~ and providing hook or pile fasteners on the strap and between which the slit is located.

$$40^\circ < \alpha < 50^\circ.$$

Claim 11 (original) The method of claim 7 including folding the strap structure to cause the strap second portion to extend downwardly through the slit.

Claim 12 (new) The method of claim 7 including providing stiffener means on the first strap portion and proximate the slit, said means provided to include elongated stiffeners extending parallel to the slit and at opposite sides thereof, and providing cushioning to extend over said stiffeners.